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Scylla the Beauty and Scylla the Beast: A Homeric Allusion in the *Ciris*

‘Once we have accepted that the *Ciris* stems from neither Virgil nor Gallus, but was written by a post-Virgilian poetaster...’ – with these words R.O.A.M. Lyne, who was later to produce the nowadays standard commentary on the poem,¹ begins his first substantial contribution to the *Cirisfrage*.² The quoted passage contains two fundamental statements, one made explicitly and the other only implied. The former is that the *Ciris* postdates Virgil. Although since then it has been argued again that the *Ciris* does stem from Gallus,³ it need not concern us at present. The latter asserts that the *Ciris* is mediocre poetry. And indeed, throughout the article Lyne is never tired of pointing out in the *Ciris* instances of ‘heavy-handed’ and ‘unskillful’ plagiarism.⁴ Lyne was, understandably, not alone in this condescending attitude to his object of study, an attitude made fashionable by Housman’s passing remark that the *Ciris* ‘was indited by a twaddler’.⁵ But it was Lyne’s commentary, which is indeed, as a reviewer puts it, ‘an excellent book on a poem which is less than excellent’,⁶ that virtually canonized the view of the *Ciris* as a derivative piece of poetry.

Since the publication of Lyne’s commentary a number of minor studies on the *Ciris* have appeared, which often make considerable progress in solving individual problems or establishing separate allusions, but still do not attempt a systematic re-evaluation of the poem. Characteristic is the ingenious demonstration by Catherine Connors that the puzzling reference to ‘simultaneous hunting and herding’ at *Ciris* 299 f. (*Cnosia nec Partho contendens spicula cornu/ Dictaeas ageres ad gramina nota capellas*)⁷ does not in fact imply actual herding at all, but alludes to the belief ‘that goats that had been wounded by a hunter were able to save themselves by seeking out and ingesting dictamnus’ (i.e. *gramina nota*).⁸ (Indeed, as has been observed by Annette Bartels approaching the poem from a narratological perspective, ‘eine Analyse, die den Text mit seinen Eigentüm-

1 Lyne 1978.

2 Lyne 1971, 233.

3 Gall 1999.

4 Lyne 1971, 240, 241, 248.

5 Housman 1902, 339.

6 Williams 1980a, 247.

7 Cf. Lyne 1978, 226–27.

8 Connors 1991, 558.

lichkeiten ernst nimmt, zeigt, daß die *Ciris* zumindest besser ist als ihr Ruf'.⁹) Still, Connors cautiously admits that the 'display of etymological and scientific *doctrina* associated with dictamnus' may be derived from 'what was presumably the *Ciris* poet's source for the digression, Valerius Cato's *Dictynna*', rather than be original to the poem itself.¹⁰

Let us briefly adduce some more examples. Heather White has recently produced a plausible explanation for the perplexing comparison of the bird *ciris* with 'Leda's Amyclean goose' (489: *ciris Amyclaeo formosior ansere Leda*) as referring not to Zeus' transformation into a swan¹¹ but to that of Leda herself into a goose, as reported by some sources.¹² Jackie Pigeaud has clarified a number of difficult details in the description of Scylla's *metamorphosis* (490–507), in particular the simile comparing it with the development of the embryo within an egg, by pointing out striking parallels in ancient medical writings.¹³ Riemer Faber has firmly situated the *peplos ekphrasis* (21–35) within the earlier poetic tradition of embroidered garments as cosmic images,¹⁴ thus vindicating it from Lyne's charge of being a borrowing ill-suited to the new context.¹⁵ Luigi Lehnus and Donato De Gianni have demonstrated the *Ciris* poet's acquaintance with Callimachus' *Hecale* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* respectively, though both were partly anticipated by Atillio Dal Zotto, of whose research they seem to be unaware.¹⁶ Armando Salvatore and Erich Woytek have shed a more favourable light on the *Ciris*' engagement, though not unknown before, with the poetry of Cicero (the former) and Catullus (the latter).¹⁷ Jeffrey Wills has pointed out a suggestive allusion to Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Adrian Hollis to Nicander's *Theriaca* (in studies not primarily concerned with the *Ciris*),¹⁸ both of which we shall have the occasion to consider more closely.

⁹ Bartels 2004, 62.

¹⁰ Connors 1991, 558.

¹¹ Cf. Lyne 1971, 246. Lyne 1978, 301 also mentions 'a version in which Leda's Jupiter appeared as a goose', but that still leaves *Amyclaeo* unexplained, since it was Leda and not Zeus who had connections with Amyclae.

¹² White 2006, 180.

¹³ Pigeaud 1983. To cite just one example, Pigeaud's interpretation (130) of 499 (*medium capitis discrimen*) as the sagittal suture seems more convincing than Lyne's 1978, 304f., as the hair parting.

¹⁴ Faber 2008.

¹⁵ Cf. Lyne 1978, 109–10.

¹⁶ Lehnus 1975, though earlier than Lyne 1978, but apparently still too late to be taken into account; De Gianni 2010; Dal Zotto 1903, ignored by Lyne.

¹⁷ Salvatore 1984; Woytek 2005.

¹⁸ Wills 1996, 166; Hollis 1998, 171f.

Some (but far from all) of these advances in understanding the *Ciris* are now brought together in a new commentary by Pierluigi Gatti, who also makes further useful observations of his own, such as, for example, noting an allusion to a fragment of Euphorion's *Thrax* at *Ciris* 129–32.¹⁹ But Gatti's commentary is still too limited in scale and ambition to effect a thorough reappraisal of the poem. This is, of course, not the place to offer such a reappraisal, for the obvious reason of space limits; there is, however, enough room to take at least one more step towards it. In what follows I shall discuss a case of Homeric reception in the *Ciris*, which will both shed light on some ambiguities of the text and demonstrate the poem's sophistication in engagement with the literary past.

As pointed out by Craig Kallendorf in a study of allusion as a form of reception, 'there are two readers operating in allusion: the critic who notices an allusion and the author who wrote it'.²⁰ This underlying isomorphism of the two modes of reception – reading by the critic and reading by the author – often leads to the former's role being assimilated to that of the latter: modern scholarship tends to value the critic's creativity in producing a text's meaning. I would suggest that the reverse perspective is also valid: the author can in a sense be thought of as being as passive in interpreting a predecessor's text as the ideal critic of an earlier generation had to be. This ambivalence of the author's role in appropriating a model, it will be shown, is not merely exemplified in the *Ciris*, but deliberately thematized by the poet.

I propose to begin by reading and discussing a passage of the *Ciris* that embeds – as we shall come to see – a Homeric context, albeit in an implicit way. As a punishment for the betrayal of her father and city, the Megarian princess Scylla, daughter of Nisus, is being dragged through the sea behind Minos' ship, when at last she is pitied by Amphitrite and turned into the *ciris* (478–89):

*fertur et incertis iactatur ad omnia uentis,
cumba uelut magnas sequitur cum paruula classis
Afer et hiberno bacchatur in aequore turbo,
donec tale decus formae uexarier undis
non tulit ac miseros mutauit uirginis artus
caeruleo pollens coniunx Neptunia regno.
sed tamen aeternum squamis uestire puellam*

¹⁹ Gatti 2010, 128, though here too he is anticipated by Latte 1935, 149 n. 35, and Spanoudakis 2004, 39. This allusion may be of some interest for the argument that the *Ciris* is a work of Gallus as in antiquity Gallus was closely associated with Euphorion.

²⁰ Kallendorf 2006, 68. On the latter's role as a reader, cf. further: 'The alluding author begins the process by reading an earlier text, then working out an interpretation of that text. As he or she begins writing, the new text unfolds in dialogue with the old one.'

*infidosque inter teneram committere pisces
non statuit (nimium est auidum pecus Amphitrites):
aeriis potius sublimem sustulit alis,
esset ut in terris facti de nomine ciris,
ciris Amyclaeo formosior ansere Ladae.*

*Onward she moves, tossed to and fro by uncertain winds
(like a tiny skiff when it follows a great fleet,
and an African hurricane riots upon the wintry sea)
until Neptune's spouse, queen of the azure realm,
suffered it not that such a beauteous form should be harassed by the waves,
and transformed the maiden's sorry limbs.
But even so she decided not to clothe the gentle maid with scales forever,
or place her amid treacherous fishes
(all too greedy is Amphitrite's flock):
rather, she raised her aloft on airy wings,
that she might live on earth as Ciris, named from the deed wrought—
Ciris, more beautiful than Leda's Amyclaeon swan.
(trans. Fairclough/ Goold 2000 with minor adjustments)*

It is the figure of Amphitrite and her role in this context that require most attention. As Lyne acknowledges, there seems to be 'no parallel for Amphitrite as the agent of Scylla's transformation, indeed for her playing any prominent part in the Scylla Nisi (as opposed to Scylla *monstrum*) story', though he concedes that her entry is 'fairly natural, given that it is in her province that Scylla is suffering'.²¹ Shortly we shall see that the main reason for introducing Amphitrite is indeed to create a link with the story of the other Scylla.

Within the quoted passage Amphitrite is named twice: first, by *antonomasia*, as *coniunx Neptunia* at 483; then, directly, at 486. The latter context is peculiar, as Lyne rightly points out: 'Is *Amphitrites* here metonymy or proper name? Neither is particularly easy given that Amphitrite is the subject of the main sentence. I am inclined to think that it is not a metonymy [...]. *pecus A[mphitrites]* is a much livelier phrase at any rate if *Amphitrites* is not a metonymy'.²² We shall see that Lyne is probably right in taking *Amphitrites* literally, but the problem is deeper than Lyne realized.²³ If *Amphitrites* is a metonymy, it reduces the expression *pecus Amphitrites* to a metaphorical periphrasis meaning no more than 'inhabitants of the sea,' which suits the context perfectly. If, however, *Amphitrites* is an actual proper name, it seems natural to take *pecus* literally as well;

²¹ Lyne 1978, 298.

²² Lyne 1978, 300.

²³ Other commentators – Némethy 1909, Lenchantin de Gubernatis 1930, Hielkema 1941, Salvatore 1955, Haury 1957, Knecht 1970, Dolç 1984, Gatti 2010 – are no more helpful than Lyne.

but then one cannot help wondering why Amphitrite's sheep, which (one assumes) peacefully graze in pastures of seaweed, should pose a threat even to a small fish such as Scylla would be likely to become.

The passage we are dealing with evokes a context from earlier in the *Ciris*, the section of the proem that announces the poem's plot and also recounts variant stories told about (the other) Scylla (46–91).²⁴ In a pointed manner, Amphitrite's decision to turn Scylla into a bird rather than fish mirrors the narrator's choice of that particular version of Scylla's *metamorphosis* (note *potius*):

*aeriis potius sublimem sustulit alis,
esset ut in terris facti de nomine ciris.* (487–88)

*Rather, she raised her aloft on airy wings,
that she might live on earth as Ciris, named from the deed wrought.*

*Scylla nouos auium sublimis in aere coetus
uiderit et tenui conscendens aethera penna
caeruleis sua tecta super uolitauerit alis.* (49–51)

*Scylla saw in the sky aloft strange gatherings of birds,
and, mounting the heavens on slender pinions,
hovered on azure wings above her home.*

*...potius liceat notescere cirin
atque unam ex multis Scyllam non esse puellis.* (90–91)

*Rather, let Ciris become known,
and not a Scylla who was but one of many maidens.*
(trans. Fairclough/Goold 2000 with minor adjustments)

Likewise, the preceding lines (481–86) telling of Amphitrite's general intention to transform Scylla bring to mind the account of alternative versions given in the proem (54–89). That section of the *Ciris* is badly preserved, and the text's meaning is not always clear, but overall features are discernible. The narrator starts by rejecting the variant claiming that it was Scylla the daughter of Nisus who turned into the Homeric Scylla (54–63).²⁵ Then he considers different alternative versions of the origin of Scylla the monster (64–88). Firstly, she may be the daughter of either Crataeis (so Homer) or some other monster (66 f.). Secondly, she may be a mere fiction, an allegorical image of lust (68 f.). Thirdly, and this is the most relevant version, Scylla may be a beautiful girl with whom Neptune

²⁴ On the different ancient accounts of Scylla(s), see Hopman 2012.

²⁵ Peirano 2009, 188–92, argues that Callimachus may have been an exponent of this conflated version. On the distinction between, and conflation of, the two Scyllas in Hellenistic and Roman poetry, see Hopman 2012, 195–215.

committed adultery and who in revenge was transformed by Amphitrite into a monster (70–76). Finally, she may be a prostitute who was thus punished for offending Venus (77–88).

The reference to Amphitrite as *coniunx Neptunia* at 483 is not therefore a mere figure of speech, but performs the function of a pointer to that earlier context: unlike the other Scylla who slept with Neptune, Scylla the daughter of Nisus has done nothing wrong to Amphitrite and consequently she is turned (482: *mutauit uirginis artus*, cf. 70: *speciem mutata*) into a beautiful bird rather than a hideous sea monster. But the two contexts have also another, deeper connection. In the idiosyncratic account given by the *Ciris* the attack on Odysseus and his companions is viewed as Scylla's revenge for what Amphitrite did to her (74–76).²⁶ According to the logic of this variant of the story, Odysseus must be a protégé of Amphitrite's – and so is Scylla the daughter of Nisus. Both suffer at sea: the former is violently attacked (60: *uexasse*) by Scylla the monster, the latter is tossed (481: *uexarier*) by the violent waves,²⁷ and it is only through Amphitrite's intervention that Nisus' daughter is rescued from the menacing sea beasts (note 451–453 speaking of *aequoreae pristes*).

The most obvious source for the treatment of Scylla the monster in the poem is Homer, the only poetic authority referred to by name (65: *Colophoniaco ... Homero*, cf. 62: *Maeoniae ... chartae*). The mention of Crataeis as Scylla's mother (66: *ipse Crataein ait matrem*) is perhaps the most precise and explicit piece of information that is derived from the *Odyssey* (12.124–25: *Κράταιν,/ μητέρα τῆς Σκύλλης*) but far from the only one. The following passage seems particularly relevant (12.95–100):

αὐτοῦ δ' ἰχθυάα, σκόπελον περιμαιώωσα,
 δελφῖνάς τε κύνας τε καὶ εἴ ποθι μείζον ἔλῃσι
 κῆτος, ἃ μυρία βόσκει ἀγαστονος Ἀμφιτρίτη.
 τῇ δ' οὐ πώ ποτε ναῦται ἀκῆριοι εὐχετόωνται
 παρφυγέειν σὺν νηϊ· φέρει δέ τε κρατὶ ἐκάστῳ
 φῶτ' ἐξαρπάξασα νεὸς κυανοπώροιο.

*She fishes there, eagerly searching around the rock
 for dolphins and sea-dogs and whatever greater beast she may happen to catch,
 such creatures as deep-wailing Amphitrite rears in multitudes past counting.
 By her no sailors yet may boast that they have fled*

²⁶ The idiosyncrasy lies in the fact that the idea of the attack on Odysseus as a means of revenge comes from an analogous story in which Scylla is transformed, for a similar reason, by Circe: as Lyne 1978, 133 points out, 'there is no tradition that Odysseus was ever a favourite of Amphitrite's as he was of Circe's – so Scylla's actions could hardly have piqued her'.

²⁷ The connection is noted by Skutsch 1901, 101.

*unharm'd in their ship; for with each head she carries off a man,
snatching him from the dark-prow'd ship.*
(trans. Murray/ Dimock 1995 with minor adjustments)

This is of course the subtext that underlies the description of Scylla's attack on Odysseus at 59–61, whether it is borrowed from Virgil's *Eclogues* (6.75–77) or is original to the *Ciris*:

*candida succinctam latrantibus inguina monstribus
Dulichias uexasse rates et gurgite in alto
deprentos nautas canibus lacerasse marinis.*

*With howling monsters girt about her white waist,
she often harried the Ithacan ships and in the swirling depths
tore asunder with her sea dogs the sailors she had clutched.*
(trans. Fairclough/Goold 2000 with minor adjustments)

Scylla's barking (*latrantibus ... monstribus*) was mentioned in Homer only a few lines before (12.85: δεινὸν λελακυῖα); *nautas* renders ναῦται (one may also speculate that *timidos*, which in Virgil stands instead of *deprentos*, is a learned translation of ἀκήριοι as 'spiritless' rather than 'unharm'd'); and the ambiguous 'sea dogs' (*canibus ... marinis*) can be linked not only to 12.86 (σκύλακος νεογιλλῆς) but also – as we shall see, more correctly – to 12.96 (κύνας).

Now, finally turning to my main point, I would suggest that the phrase *pecus Amphitrites* at 486 picks up this Homeric allusion: 'Amphitrite's sheep' are precisely those 'dolphins, dogs, and other sea beasts' (*infidi pisces* indeed!) ἃ μυρία βόσκει ἀγαστονος Ἀμφιτρίτη, and that is why this *avidum pecus* poses a threat to Scylla the daughter of Nisus. To start with a formal argument, the spondaic ending *Amphitrites* is a 'figure of allusion' pointing to Ἀμφιτρίτη at *Od.* 12.97, positioned likewise at the end of the verse.²⁸ Furthermore, much as the *Ciris* context leaves in doubt whether *pecus Amphitrites* is to be taken literally or figuratively, so the Homeric one can be, and in fact was, interpreted in both ways. The ambiguity of the Latin phrase is arguably a response to the treatment of this Homeric context in Hellenistic *exegesis*. On the one hand, βόσκειν is a *vox propria* for tending livestock,²⁹ and at *Od.* 4.413 – a point made by Eustathius (2.15 referring to

²⁸ As is observed by Wills 1996, 19: 'a Latin *spondeiazon* can reflect an imitation of a particular Greek *spondeiazon*'.

²⁹ So Eustathius interprets it as referring to grazing on seaweed (2.15): δῆλον δὲ καὶ ὅτι ἡ τῶν μινίων καὶ φυκίων καὶ βρύων τῶν κατὰ θάλασσαν νομῇ βόσκει τὰ νεμόμενα, ἴσως δὲ καὶ ἐτέρων τινῶν φυτῶν ὡς εἰκὸς θαλαττίων. θύννοι γὰρ ἱστοροῦνται ἐπέκεινα Σικελίας βαλανηφαγεῖν ἀπὸ

1.173) – Proteus, another sea deity, is compared to a herdsman. On the other, as is stressed by Porphyry (ad *Il.* 8.1.86 Schrader), the epithet ἀγαστονος ('much groaning') points to the elemental rather than anthropomorphic embodiment of the sea (in contrast to *Od.* 5.422: οἷά [sc. sea beasts] τε πολλά τρέφει κλυτὸς Ἀμφιτρίτη, where the next line also speaks of κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος).³⁰ Finally, there is also a perfect reason why these *infidi pisces* are a particular threat to Scylla the daughter of Nisus: being constantly preyed on by Scylla the monster, they will be only too glad to take revenge on her fenceless namesake.

Still, a slightly different interpretation is possible and perhaps even preferable. One lesser-known rationalizing explanation of the Homeric monster, fragmentarily preserved in the scholia to Apollonius' *Argonautica*,³¹ treats 'dolphins, dogs, and other sea beasts' as an integral part of the dangerous natural phenomenon underlying Homer's depiction of Scylla:³² according to these scholia, Scylla is a promontory with underwater reefs at its feet, full of fish of prey that attack sailors shipwrecked there. This interpretation is apparently alluded to in the *Aeneid* (3.425: *navis in saxa trahentem*; there are no reefs in Homer) and it may well be behind the description of the Homeric Scylla in the *Ciris* proem at 60f.: *uexasse rates et gurgite in alto/ deprensos nautas canibus lacerasse marinis*. As Lyne observes, although at first sight *deprensos* seems to imply being snatched by Scylla, 'such a very literal sense is in fact hard to parallel,' whilst '*deprendo* is in fact almost a *uox propria* of people being caught unaware, at a disadvantage, for one reason or another (usually, obviously, weather) *at sea*.'³³ If so, the passage easily allows of a rationalizing interpretation along the lines suggested by the scholia to Apollonius (note especially ad 4.825–831b: εἴτα ἐξιόντες θαλάσσιοι κύνες καὶ ἕτερα διάφορα θηρία ἐσθίουσι τοὺς ἐν ταῖς ναυσὶν ἄνδρας): *deprensos* can be taken to mean 'suffering shipwreck' and *canibus lacerasse marinis* to refer to attack of 'sea dogs' (θαλάσσιοι κύνες, going back to *Od.* 12.96: κύνας), that is either sharks or some other dangerous fish rather than 'real'

δρυαρίων φρομένων κατὰ θάλασσαν – despite the fact that Homer is evidently speaking of fish of prey.

30 Though the last argument can be turned on its head: since at *Od.* 5.422 Amphitrite is clearly a deity rather than element, so it should be at *Od.* 12.97 as well.

31 For texts, see Ressel 2000, 10, n. 12, who also conveniently adduces relevant fragments from Sallust and the scholia to Lycophron's *Alexandra*.

32 Virgil's description of Scylla's lower half as *immani corpore pistrinx/ delphinum caudas utero commissa luporum* (*Aen.* 3.427 f.) seems likewise to be interpreting δελφινάς τε κύνας τε καὶ εἴ ποθι μείζον ἔλῃσι/ κήτος as part of the monster.

33 Lyne 1978, 128.

dogs.³⁴ Ironically enough, it thus turns out that Scylla the princess is rescued in the end, on some implicit level of meaning, from none other than Scylla the monster. This rescue of one Scylla from the other has apparently also a poetological dimension, for Scylla the daughter of Nisus is indeed saved by the author, through his choice of a particular variant of the myth, from transforming into the Homeric monster.

However, although the version that makes both Scyllas one and the same figure is explicitly rejected already in the proem, and after that Scylla the monster completely disappears from the narrative, on the level of subtexts the danger is never over. As has been suggested by Wills, the passage denouncing Scylla as the ruin of both her father and fatherland (130 f.: *Scylla nouo correpta furore,/ Scylla, patris miseri patriaeque inuenta sepulcrum*) contains an allusion, signalled by the reduplication of *Scylla*, to a context in the *Argonautica* speaking of the other Scylla's parents (4.827–29):³⁵

ἤὲ παρὰ Σκύλλης στυγερὸν κευθμῶνα νέεσθαι
(Σκύλλης Αὐσονίης ὀλοόφρονος, ἦν τέκε Φόρκῳ
νυκτιπόλος Ἑκάτη, τήν τε κλείουσι Κράταιν)...³⁶

Nor to sail by the hideous den of Scylla
(the deadly Ausonian Scylla, whom night-wandering Hecate,
the one called Crataeis, bore to Phorcys).
(trans. Race 2009 with minor adjustments)

And as has been observed by Hollis, the striking comparison of Scylla being dragged behind Minos' ship (478–80, quoted above) to 'a dinghy when towed behind a cargo-boat' seems to originate in an analogous simile from Nicander's *Theriaca* that illustrates 'the crooked motion of a *cerastes*'³⁶ (268–70):

³⁴ Furthermore, 59: *succinctam latrantibus inguina monstribus* finds a parallel in Sallust (*Hist.* 4.27, a fragment going back to the same common source as the scholia): *caninis succinctam capitibus, quia collisi ibi fluctus latratus uidentur exprimere*.

³⁵ Wills 1996, 166: 'The recombination of the two Scyllas was a poetic favourite, so the reference is not impeded by the fact that Apollonius' Σκύλλη is the sea peril rather than the daughter of Nisus. In fact, the Scylla of the *Ciris* turns out to be just as ruinous (*patris ... sepulcrum*) as the fabled monster (ὀλοόφρονος). The passage from Apollonius may have had further appeal as a rare mention of the monstrous Scylla's father, since the relationship of father and daughter is at heart of the Latin poem'.

³⁶ Hollis 1998, 171–72. Lyne 1971, 248, explained this simile in the *Ciris* 'as being due to the unskillful plagiarism of our poet' from Stat. *Silv.* 1.4.120–22.

τράμπιος ὀλκαίης ἀκάτω ἴσος ἢ τε δι' ἄλλης
 πλευρὸν ὅλον βάπτουσα, κακοσταθέοντος ἀήτεω,
 εἰς ἄνεμον βεβίηται ἀπόκρουστος λιβὸς οὐρῳ.

*Like the dinghy of a merchantman dipping its whole side
 in the brine when the wind is contrary,
 as it forces its way to windward.*
 (trans. Gow/ Scholfield 1953)

Though hiding under the surface of the text's literal meaning, this sinister snake cannot but indicate to the attentive reader a far different course of metamorphosing Scylla than that chosen by Amphitrite and the narrator. In this way, I would suggest, the *Ciris* poet acknowledges that, once evoked, a source text can never be completely obliterated; once begun, the process of reception will go on within the new text, sometimes even against the author's will.

As a conclusion, I would like to offer tentatively some further thoughts on the poetological implications of the Scylla myth as treated in the *Ciris*. In a recent discussion of the figure of Scylla in classical Roman and Renaissance English poetry, Philip Hardie has pointed out that the duality of Scylla's nature, which is particularly characteristic of Ovid's version where she is turned into half-maiden and half-monster, reflects the reader's 'more sophisticated response to poetic fictions' that 'is divided between disbelief and the willing suspension of disbelief'; for 'in Ovid's narrative of the actual transformation of Scylla the issue of believability, *credulitas*, is transferred from the poet's readers to the subject of metamorphosis herself'³⁷ (*Met.* 14.59–63):

*Scylla uenit mediaque tenus descenderat aluo,
 cum sua foedari latrantibus inguina monstribus
 adspicit; ac primo, credens non corporis illas
 esse sui partes, refugitque abigitque timetque
 ora proterua canum. sed quos fugit attrahit una.*

*Then Scylla comes and wades waist-deep into the water;
 When all at once she sees her loins disfigured with barking monster-shapes.
 And at first, not believing that these are parts of her own body,
 she flees in fear and tries to drive away
 the boisterous, barking things. But what she flees, she takes along with her.*
 (trans. Miller/Goold 1984 with minor adjustments)

Hardie also makes a relevant observation (this time from a slightly different perspective) on what is the dividing plane of Scylla's hybridity: 'it is those parts of

³⁷ Hardie 2009b, 121.

her body that lie beneath the surface of the water poisoned by Circe's drugs that undergo metamorphosis'.³⁸ I would suggest that, thus interpreted, the quoted Ovidian passage provides an excellent commentary on the way the *Ciris* poet deals with variant images of Scylla(s), whether or not the *Metamorphoses* actually postdate the *Ciris*.³⁹ Above the water surface, that is, on the literal level, Scylla is a beautiful princess who is turned into a graceful bird; beneath it, that is, on the level of subtexts and hidden meanings, she can be as monstrous and hideous as the Homeric beast. Not only, however, does Ovid explicate this tension between the explicit and the implicit in static terms, he also depicts the dynamics of the reading process: at first the reader can only see what is on the surface, but gradually, often against his own will and to his own disappointment, he also becomes aware of various undertones, potentially sinister and subversive – provided, of course, that he looks beneath the surface at all.

As noted above, both the critic and the author can be thought of as readers, and accordingly this pattern of progressing from the explicit to the implicit is characteristic of both the critic's and the author's engagement with an earlier text. At some point both the critic and the author lose control over the text they are 'reading', which then takes over the initiative in creating –or sometimes destroying– the meaning. How to deal with this Scylla of uncontrollable intertextual associations is a question of great importance, and moreover one that is a central issue for the poetological agenda of the *Ciris*. But to face it, and escape the fate of Odysseus' companions, we need to be better equipped than we are at the moment. In this paper I have tried to produce, by focusing on a single case of Homeric reception, just one more piece of evidence that further demonstrates the importance of taking into account the intertextual dimension of the *Ciris*. For if we ignore it, the *Ciris*, as indeed any poem, will turn into a lifeless –to return to the Ovidian image (14.73)– *scopulum, qui nunc quoque saxeus exstat*.

³⁸ Hardie 2009b, 126.

³⁹ Note that the collocation *latrantibus inguina monstribus* is only attested at *Ciris* 59, Verg. *Ecl.* 6.75 and Ov. *Met.* 14.60.

